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A TRIBUTE TO DR. RUTH GRUBER

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in tribute to Dr. Ruth Gruber who recently celebrated her ninetieth birthday on September 30th, 2001. A courageous leader, devoted humanitarian, acclaimed journalist, and loving grandmother, Dr. Gruber's contribution to New York and our nation is immeasurable.

At the age of 20, Dr. Gruber became the youngest Ph.D. in the world. That, a remarkable achievement in and of itself, was only the first of many unprecedented accomplishments. In 1944, at the request of then Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Dr. Gruber was sent on a top secret mission to escort 1,000 refugees from war-torn Europe to America. After safely arriving back in the United States, she immediately led the charge to ensure that the refugees be allowed to stay in the country permanently.

Dr. Gruber's talents as a journalist took her to all corners of the globe. She was the first foreign correspondent to enter the Soviet gulag, an experience which she chronicled in her book, *I Went to the Soviet Arctic*. She visited Korea and Vietnam to write *They Came to Stay*, a book about 10 Korean children who had been adopted by families in the United States. Through her many books and articles Dr. Gruber has been our eyes on the world. We are fortunate that she went to places she knew we needed to see and told such compelling stories.

In February, CBS will air *Haven*, a four hour documentary chronicling Dr. Gruber's exceptional life. At age ninety, she still has plans to write more books, although much of her time is spent with her precious grandchildren. It is my privilege to thank Dr. Gruber for all she has done for our society, and of course, to wish her a happy ninetieth birthday.

HONORING THELMA HERMAN

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it brings me great pleasure to have the opportunity to congratulate Thelma Herman, who recently celebrated her 103rd birthday. It isn't often that one encounters a person with such longevity and, according to her friends at Belmont Senior Care, she is still going strong.

Thelma has spent much of her life living in Pueblo, Colorado. As a young adult, she worked as a telephone operator and at a pharmacy. She has outlived both of her siblings and has only one surviving relative. Thelma cannot quite nail down exactly why she has survived so long, but she has always been relatively healthy. Thelma has developed a wide variety of healthy habits throughout her life including drinking a glass of water with every meal, taking a walk each day, never snacking between meals and brushing her teeth several

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times per day. Her advice to young Americans today is to be a good citizen. Thelma has been a good role model and citizen who has voted nearly her entire life.

Mr. Speaker, it brings me great pleasure to congratulate Thelma for this phenomenal achievement. She is an exceptional individual and I wish her only the best and continued prosperity. Happy Birthday Thelma!

OPPRESSION OF AFGHAN WOMEN

HON. EARL F. HILLIARD

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Mr. HILLIARD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my distress over the oppression of Afghan women. These women, who only won their freedom for a few years in all of history, have been driven back into oppression by a brutal, violent and blindly ignorant regime. Forced by the Taliban out of the schools allowed by former ruler Nur Mohammed Taraki, women are now uneducated. Women cannot work, but can be forced to beg for bread.

Women are forbidden to sing or listen to music, and will be viciously beaten if seen in public with men who are not relatives. Women in today's Afghanistan cannot be treated by a male doctor, and will be killed if they are treated by one. The life expectancy of Afghan women is 43, almost half that of American women. This vicious oppression is not the will of God or of any decent man.

Women have been oppressed throughout the ages by every society on earth, but have gone a long way toward gaining freedom and dignity. Afghanistan's brutal rulers and their fundamentalist counterparts in other religions must not be allowed to destroy the lives, the futures, and the honor of women.

This Congress must support these desperate victims and any counterparts they have in any other part of the world. People of faith from every nation and every religion must unite to end all use of twisted religious rhetoric, to oppress any person. We must apply this principle to Afghanistan now, and to our own lives everyday.

TRIBUTE TO BOB LARSON, FOUNDER OF NORTHWOODS AIRLIFELINE

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 16, 2001

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Michigan resident Bob Larson, a man who turned his own passion for flying into a non-profit, lifesaving organization that serves the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Bob is the prime mover behind Northwoods Airlifeline, an organization of pilots who volunteer their time and aircraft to help obtain medical assistance unavailable in Upper Michigan. Since Bob conceived the service in 1989, Northwoods Airlifeline has flown more than 1,100 missions—all free of charge, Mr. Speaker—to destinations all around the Midwest.

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Northwoods Airlifeline fills a gap in critical services by transporting patients who may be financially distressed, who may be unable to travel by car or commercial transportation, or who for medical reasons may face severe time constraints.

The primary need of individuals served by Northwoods Airlifeline has been organ transplants, since there is no facility in Upper Michigan to perform this procedure. The service has also met the needs of chronically-ill people who cannot afford to fly or drive long distances, and it has transported medical patients who are beyond medical help to be with their loved ones.

Bob Larson, a native of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and a World War II Navy veteran, took flying lessons after he left the service and went to work in Chicago, where he bought his first plane in 1958.

But Bob, along with Ruth, his wife of 57 years, who is a registered nurse, eventually moved back to the North Woods, settling in the small town of Witch Lake in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The Larsons shared a dream of forming an air medical service to assist friends and neighbors in times of medical emergency.

From these two caring, giving, loving individuals Northwoods Airlifeline was born, and it is still coordinated by Bob today. The organization recruits volunteer pilots, operates a dispatching network to receive and fill requests for transportation, and conducts community education and fund raising programs for its services. There are no salaried personnel or rental expenses. Pilots and volunteers absorb fuel costs and other expenses, and all donations go toward the administrative costs of transporting those in need.

The high regard in which the service is held can be summed up in the comments of a man who was flown out of state for a surgical procedure, "Well, I have met some real-life angels, wings included," he said, "only their wings are attached to the airplanes they fly."

Bob Larson is being honored on Oct. 20 by Iron Mountain Chapter #44, Order of the Eastern Star, which has selected him as the 13th recipient of the annual Eastern Star Community Service Award. The purpose of the award is to recognize an individual, not affiliated with any Masonic or Masonic-related organization, who has shown unselfish dedication for the betterment of the community and the world in general.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage you and all our House colleagues to go on the World Wide Web at www.northwoodsairlifeline.org and read about the other men and women who make this vital service possible, and read the wonderful stories of the families that Northwoods Airlifeline has assisted.

We say that dreamers have their heads in the clouds, Mr. Speaker, but maybe it's up in the clouds, where Bob Larson spent so much time, that one gains the best perspective of the world and the place of each individual in it. So I ask you to join me in celebrating the accomplishments of two dreamers, Bob and Ruth Larson, and the wonderful volunteer organization they have brought into being.